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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001592

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INL AND EAP
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/02/2012

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: DRUGS, THUGS AND FACTS

REF: A. (A) BANGKOK 8488

[1](#)B. (B) BANGKOK 08493

[1](#)C. (C) CHIANG MAI 0302

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez. Reason: 1.5 (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Embassy Rangoon wants to provide clarification and counterpoint to reftels reporting on Burma counterterrorism and counternarcotics issues. When discussing drugs and thugs, accurate information is absolutely crucial to framing USG counternarcotics strategy in the context of Burma-Thai relations. Reftels draw some unwarranted conclusions that distort the discussion of narcotics and terrorism issues in Burma and Thailand. Post also encourages more support for Burmese/Thai cooperation on the methamphetamine problem as, in contrast to opium (which is being attacked effectively at its source in Burma), it is a regional problem which must be dealt with through regional strategies. The Thaksin government appears to understand this but, to judge from recent reports, that understanding is not yet wide-spread within the ranks of Thai officials. End Summary.

Terrorism

[1](#)2. (C) Reftel A concludes that the evidence suggests the SPDC is bombing Burmese embassies as part of a "dirty tricks" campaign against pro-democracy groups in Thailand. There is no doubt that defaming these groups is a priority for the SPDC. However, more facts, and an examination of the motives of all parties involved, are needed before basing such a conclusion solely on information provided by an FTUB (Free Trade Union of Burma) contact with "allies" at the Thai NSC. Right now, saying the letter bombs are just "dirty tricks" is unwarranted.

[1](#)3. (C) Two points in particular stand out. First, aside from initial press mention of the receipt of the letter bombs, the GOB has not heavily publicized the mail bombing campaign against their embassies. If the SPDC was trying to blame the FTUB or any other Thai based pro-democracy groups, one can bet they would be mounting one of their heavy-handed media blitzes and accusing those groups of terrorist acts. Secondly, the reason the GOB has not turned the bombs over to the Thais is because, according to our sources, the bombs were either destroyed (in some cases), or turned over to the host-country authorities where the targeted Burmese embassies are located. These embassy letter bombings are now under investigation by Burmese and, according to Ref A, Thai authorities. Once that investigation is complete the guilty parties can be named. Right now the word of the FTUB should not be considered the final word on the letter bomb incidents.

Counternarcotics

[1](#)4. (C) Comments by high ranking RTA officials that the Burmese army is flooding Thailand with a billion tablets of methamphetamines have morphed from allegations to "fact". Although the "billion tablet" allegations were subsequently denied in the press by RTA spokesmen, that number has become imbedded in the Burma-Thai counternarcotics discussion and it distorts any clear picture of Burmese counternarcotics efforts as well as Thai interdiction programs. In Ref B, Bangkok reports discussing the RTA statement with senior Thai ONCB officials who are quoted as telling Bangkok NAS that "any estimates of next year's amphetamine production were obviously based on speculation and varied widely" (the RTA officials' predictions of one billion methamphetamine pills into Thailand this year is also incompatible with available data from DEA and ONCB). According to Reftel C, seizures in Thailand's northern provinces totaled about 22 million pills - a number that suggests either unusually inept Thai interdiction efforts or that the flow of methamphetamines is well below a billion tablets.

[1](#)5. (C) Comment: When discussing drugs and thugs, accurate information is always absolutely crucial to framing USG counternarcotics and counterterrorism strategy - so should it be in discussing these issues in the regional context of Burma and Thailand. Post offers our views as counterpoint and clarification to reftels and makes this observation: in

contrast to opium, which is being attacked effectively at its source in Burma, methamphetamine production and trafficking are regional problems and they must be treated through regional strategies and cooperation. The same applies to counterterrorism efforts. The Thaksin government appears to understand this but, to judge from recent reports, that understanding is not yet wide-spread within the ranks of Thai officials. End Comment.
Martinez